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BEFORE THE INSURANCE COMMISSIONER
OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

In the Matter of

No. G02-45

THE APPLICATION REGARDING
THE CONVERSION AND
ACQUISITION OF CONTROL OF
PREMERA BLUE CROSS AND
ITS AFFILIATES

PRE-FILED RESPONSIVE
TESTIMONY OF KEITH
LEFFLER, PH.D

I, Keith Leffler, Ph.D, do hereby declare that the following facts are personally known to me and, if called upon to do so, I would testify to them.

Response to Thomas McCarthy

1. I have reviewed the report¹, supplemental report, and prefiled testimony of Premera economic consultant Thomas McCarthy.
2. I have a number of substantive disagreements with the analysis of Dr. McCarthy. I first summarize my primary disagreements and then explain the basis in each case.
 - a. Dr. McCarthy testifies that the relevant product market is the supply of all health insurance. He also testifies that the relevant geographical market is all of the state of Washington. These product market and the geographic market definitions are overly inclusive. The improper product market definition masks

¹ Antitrust and Economic Impact Analysis of the Proposed Conversion of Premera Blue Cross in the State of Washington

1 the high market share and the actual market power possessed by Premera in
2 proper, narrower commercial product markets. Dr. McCarthy's improper
3 geographical market definition masks the actual market power of Premera in the
4 proper, narrower geographic markets of certain areas of Eastern Washington.

- 5 b. The evidence offered by Dr. McCarthy as to entry into and expansion in the
6 supply of health insurance in Eastern Washington does not support his
7 conclusion that there are low barriers to entry. In fact, other than Asuris, there
8 has been no significant entry or expansion in the supply of health insurance to
9 individuals, small or large groups in Eastern Washington.
- 10 c. Contrary to the analysis offered by Dr. McCarthy, the price differences between
11 the reimbursements of Premera and other insurers in certain areas of Eastern
12 Washington are evidence of the exercise of market power in the purchase of
13 provider services by Premera in these areas.

14 The Relevant Economic Market

15 3. Dr. McCarthy concludes that the relevant market is "the market for all health
16 insurance products in the state of Washington."² Thus Dr. McCarthy includes all commercial
17 and publicly-financed business, in all areas of the state, in a single market. If Dr. McCarthy
18 were correct, this would mean, for example, that an insurer offering state financed insurance to
19 low-income families in the Seattle area represents a competitive alternative for a large business
20 seeking health insurance in the Spokane area. This certainly makes no intuitive sense and it
21 also makes no economic sense.

22 4. The broader and more inclusive is the market definition, the more it will obscure
23 any product or geographical areas in which Premera dominates. Dr. McCarthy's rationale for
24 his overly inclusive market definition is that he finds "no significant regulatory or operational
25 barriers for an existing insurer to offer new products, expand into new lines of business, or

² Pre-filed Direct Testimony of Thomas R. McCarthy (hereafter McCarthy Testimony). P. 5.

1 expand into new geographical areas of the state.”³ This is not a proper economic approach to
2 identifying the set of reasonable alternatives available to buyers. The proper and standard
3 economic approach towards the definition of a relevant market is summarized in the Horizontal
4 Merger Guidelines of the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission.
5 Those Guidelines note that “[m]arket definition focuses solely on demand substitution factors -
6 - i.e., possible consumer responses.”⁴ However, Dr. McCarthy confuses the market definition
7 issue by incorporating the more difficult consideration of possible new entry directly into the
8 analysis of the relevant economic market. This is contrary to accepted economic analysis and
9 contrary to the purpose of market definition.

10
11 5. The standard economic approach towards measuring the structure of a properly
12 defined economic market does

13 [i]nclude firms currently producing or selling the market’s products in the market’s
14 geographical area. In addition, participants may include other firms depending on their
15 likely supply responses to a “small but significant and nontransitory” price increase. A
16 firm is viewed as a participant is, in response to a “small but significant and
17 nontransitory” price increase, it likely would enter rapidly into production or sale of a
18 market product in the market’s area, without incurring significant sunk costs of entry or
19 exit. ... [Such] [u]ncommitted entrants are capable of making such quick and
20 uncommitted supply responses that they likely influenced the market [before entry.]⁵

21
22 6. In essence, the Guidelines include all current participants in a market, in addition
23 to all sellers that could rapidly, and at no competitive disadvantage, offer to sell a particular
24 product at a particular place, even though the sellers are not currently selling that product at
that place.

³ McCarthy Testimony p. 5. I address below Dr. McCarthy’s claim that there has been significant
product and geographical expansions in recent years.

⁴ Merger Guidelines ¶1.0.

⁵ Merger Guidelines ¶1.0.

1 7. Thus, by including all insurers selling any health insurance product anywhere in
2 state in one statewide market for all health insurance, Dr. McCarthy presumes that insurers
3 such as Molina, that only participates in the Medicaid market, could so easily and quickly offer
4 individual, small group or large group policies in Eastern Washington that they currently and
5 effectively constrain the pricing of these policies. In fact, the evidence as to "barriers to entry"
6 discussed in my Report⁶ show that this presumption is wrong. The necessity to put together an
7 appropriate physician network, to create relationships with brokers, to inform buyers of an
8 insurer's presence, to put together the administrative apparatus to correctly judge risk and
9 expected payments, and to overcome the reluctance of employers and individuals to make short
10 term switches in health insurance all indicate that sellers not currently participating in a
11 particular segment of the insurance market in a particular location would not impact current
12 prices simply by the existence in other market segments in other places. The reluctance of
13 buyers to switch coverage is even greater when the firm seeking their business is new to the
14 market and may be gone if its effort to enter the market is unsuccessful.

16 8. If Dr. McCarthy were correct in his presumption as to the absence of any entry
17 barriers, I would expect to see insurers continually entering lines of business of areas of the
18 state and achieving market success, and also leaving business lines and regions in response to
19 small movements in market prices. There is simply no evidence supporting the absence of
20 entry barriers. As discussed below, the only "evidence" Dr. McCarthy offers in support of his
21 conjecture of no entry barriers is a flawed analysis of entry and expansion in the state.

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23 ⁶ Antitrust Review by the Office of Insurance Commissioner, Report of Keith Leffler, Ph.D (October 27,
24 2003) ("Report"). My Report is incorporated by reference in my pre-filed direct testimony and provides much of
the substance of that testimony.

1 9. A market share is a statistic that is used to infer the absence of any market power.
2 That is, if a seller has a low market share in a relevant economic market, that seller, by
3 inference, has no market power, since buyers can readily turn to the other sellers that together
4 dominate the market. Dr. McCarthy claims that Premera's market share is 28.4 percent. If this
5 is correct, then by inference, Premera has no market power since any attempt at above
6 competitive pricing will simply result in buyers switching to one of the sellers composing the
7 other 72 percent of the market. However, the low Premera market share is an artifact of the
8 incorrect market definition.

9 10. Consider, for example, an employer in Spokane County with 50 employees that is
10 currently contracting with Premera for employee health insurance. Assume Premera decides to
11 raise the premiums to this employer by 10 percent above expected cost increases. As shown in
12 my Table 1-B, Premera insured about 90% of individuals with small group health insurance in
13 Spokane County in 2001. Nonetheless, under Dr. McCarthy's approach, this employer could
14 readily turn to Molina for its health insurance. And, because Molina has a substantial overall
15 statewide market share as it dominates the Medicaid segment of health insurance, according to
16 Dr. McCarthy, Molina is a significant and practical alternative to Premera. But Molina
17 currently offers only state-financed low-income family insurance. Molina specializes in this
18 insurance segment not just in Washington State but in the other states where it operates.⁷
19 Molina's market success in "governmental" insurance provides no indication of its likely
20 ability to constrain Premera's pricing for "commercial" small group policies in Spokane
21 County. Hence, even if Dr. McCarthy were correct (which he is not) that Molina could and
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1 would readily enter the market to supply small group policies in Spokane County, Molina's
2 success in its specialty business offers no indication of its ability to be successful in the very
3 different small group market.⁸

4 There Has Not Been Significant Entry or Expansion in Eastern Washington

5 11. Dr. McCarthy concludes that "[e]ntry and expansion conditions for insurers in
6 Eastern Washington appear relatively easy."⁹ The support for this conclusion includes "five
7 instances of new insurers entering into the state during the last several years ... and ... at least
8 four instances of existing insurers gaining substantial membership"¹⁰ Dr. McCarthy also
9 claims that there are "at least fourteen instances of existing insurers expanding from one part of
10 the state into another (including four cases of expansion from Western Washington into
11 Eastern Washington.)"¹¹ Finally, as evidence that market expansion from one line of business
12 to another is relatively easy, Dr. McCarthy asserts that "there have been at least six instances of
13 existing insurers offering new products or expanding into new lines of business."¹² However,
14 after examining in detail the purported examples of entry and geographical and product line
15 expansion, I find that there is no evidence that any such entry or expansion would have
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17 ⁷ The specialty nature of this business is well illustrated by Premiera's recent exit from this line of
18 business.

19 ⁸ Market shares are intended to provide an indication of sellers' success as measured by buyers'
20 demonstrated willingness to deal with them. Hence, if Premiera has 20 percent of a relevant market, another seller
21 with a similar share, is, according to buyers, an equally effective competitor. Dr. McCarthy, however, mixes and
22 matches "success" information from very different lines of business. The fact that, for example, Aetna may be
23 successful in offering mega group policies (that might be a function of nationwide offering to a geographically
24 dispersed employer) tells me nothing of Aetna's ability or willingness to offer individual policies. Similarly,
Molina's success in the state-financed segment tells me nothing about their ability to compete for commercial
individual, small or large group business. An analogy clarifies. Consider the sale of autos. Ford sells a
significant share of all automobiles. This, however, has no implications as to its likely success in the ultra-luxury
auto market.

⁹ McCarthy Testimony p. 9.

¹⁰ McCarthy Testimony p. 9.

¹¹ McCarthy Testimony p. 6.

1 significant impact on Premera's ability to exploit its market dominance in individual, small and
2 large lines of business in certain areas of Eastern Washington.¹³

3 12. As discussed at length in my Report, Premera dominates the supply of commercial
4 insurance to individual, small group and large groups in those areas of Eastern Washington
5 where Premera does not compete with Regence Blue Shield (hereafter the 14 county area of
6 Eastern Washington).¹⁴ Hence, the only markets (on the selling side) that are of concern in
7 analyzing market power are these lines of business in these areas of Eastern Washington.
8 Therefore, it is only entry or expansion into these areas and lines of business that are relevant
9 to the issue of Premera market power.

10 There Has Been No Significant Entry into Areas of Business Dominated by Premera¹⁵

11 13. In the McCarthy, five "Health Insurers Entering Washington 1995-2002" are
12 listed in Table 6.¹⁶ However, upon examination, not one of the listed cases provides evidence
13 that entry is easy nor do the cases provide evidence that entry possibilities constrain Premera's
14 exercise of market power.

15 14. The first entrant cited by Dr. McCarthy is UnitedHealth Group in 1995. However
16 Dr. McCarthy's own table acknowledges that this was not entry but rather an acquisition of
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18 ¹² McCarthy Testimony p. 5-6.

19 ¹³ Dr. McCarthy also asserts that "there have been at least six instances of existing insurers offering new
20 products or expanding into new lines of business." McCarthy Testimony p. 5-6. However, Dr. McCarthy does not
21 list who provided these new products, what the new products were, or where they were offered. Hence, I am
22 unable to evaluate this assertion. However, I am unaware of any significant in any such offerings in the relevant
23 product lines in the relevant areas, and the OIC enrollments statistics certainly do not show such success in new
24 product offerings.

¹⁴ As discussed in my Report, the option of self insurance likely limits any exercise of market power by a
22 dominant insurer in the large group market.

¹⁵ These "areas" include the supply of individual and small group coverage in the 14 county area of
23 Eastern Washington.

¹⁶ McCarthy and Thomas, Antitrust and Economic Impact Analysis of the Proposed Conversion of
24 Premera Blue Cross in the State of Washington (hereafter NERA Report), p. 22.

1 MetraHealth,¹⁷ Economically, entry that might constrain the pricing of a dominant firm refers
2 to entry of a new competitor (rather than an acquisition) that is able to establish a significant
3 market presence in a relatively short period. Also, according to the Profile of Washington
4 State Health Plans, UnitedHealth Group had enrollment of 111 members in all of Washington
5 in 2001.¹⁸ In addition, Premera's 12/31/2002 analysis of the Eastern Washington market does
6 not even list UnitedHealth Group.¹⁹ Hence, this acquisition is certainly not an example
7 illustrating the ability of a new entrant to capture significant sales in a short period of time.

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9 15. The second example of insurers entering Washington who purportedly constrain
10 competition is First Choice. However, First Choice had membership of 770 in Eastern
11 Washington at the end of 2002, and First Choice is leaving the health insurance industry.²⁰ Its
12 entry was therefore a failure.

13 16. Dr. McCarthy also lists Great West's One Health Plan of Washington as an
14 example of entry showing low barriers of entry. However, Dr. McCarthy's Table 7 shows that
15 One Health lost over half its enrollment between 2001 and 2002. Premera's Market Research
16 indicates that One Health had 19 members in all of Eastern Washington in 2002.²¹

17 17. Molina is Dr. McCarthy's fourth example of entry. However, as indicated in Dr.
18 McCarthy's own table, this was not entry but rather an acquisition.²² In addition, Molina does
19 not compete at all in the lines of business where Premera's market dominance is of concern –
20 commercial individual, small and large group plans.

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22 ¹⁷ NERA Report, Table 6, Sources Col. 1.

23 ¹⁸ OICEXP NERA07993. The documents stamped with the prefix "OICEXP NERA" are documents that
24 were produced by NERA in this proceeding from its own files.

¹⁹ OICEXP NERA09394-98.

²⁰ OICEXP NERA093997.

²¹ OICEXP NERA09397.

1 18. The final purported instance of entry into the market is Health Net (USelect).
2 However, Health Net does not compete in the individual or small group lines of business.
3 Health Net offers only large group plans and it has only 1615 enrolled members.²³ Premera
4 certainly does not consider Health Net to be a significant competitor as it does not include
5 them in its Market Research on Eastern Washington.²⁴

6 There Has Been Very Little Successful Entry into Eastern Washington

7 19. In Table 3 of the Premera Report, Dr. McCarthy lists "fourteen instances of
8 existing insurers expanding (entering, actually) from one part of the state into another....)"²⁵
9 Seven of these concern Eastern Washington. However, only the expansion of Regence to
10 Spokane is an actual example of any success in such entry attempts.

11 20. The first of these entries is, according to Dr. McCarthy, the 1995 acquisition of
12 Walla Walla Valley MSC by King County Medical, the predecessor to Regence. As discussed
13 above, such an acquisition is of no relevance to whether entry is easy in the 14 county area in
14 Eastern Washington where Premera is dominant.

15 21. The second entry into Eastern Washington that Dr. McCarthy uses to exemplify
16 the ease of entry is First Choice's expansion from Western Washington into Eastern
17 Washington in 1998. However, as discussed above, this expansion was a failure.

18 22. The third entry listed by Dr. McCarthy is Regence Asuris's entry into Spokane.
19 By the end of 2002, Regence Asuris had a total membership in all of Eastern Washington of
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22 ²² NERA Report Table 6, Col. (4).

23 ²³ February 26, 2004 e-mail from Ken Bryan to John Ellis and Keith Leffler.

24 ²⁴ OICEXP NERA09394-98.

²⁵ NERA Report p. 17, McCarthy Testimony p. 6.

1 13,620 in its individual and small group plans.²⁶ This represents about 13.3% of the total
2 number of insureds in the 14 Eastern Washington counties in which Asuris does business.
3 Asuris is likely an example of a competitor that offers some constraint to Premera's exercise of
4 market power. Nonetheless, Premera continues to dominate the markets for individual and
5 small group policies in these 14 counties.

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7 23. Indeed, Asuris provides a vivid illustration of the value of both the "Blue" label
8 and an established presence in the market. At the end of 2002, Asuris had reached a total
9 commercial enrollment of 21,580 members in the 14 counties in Eastern Washington in which
10 it does business.²⁷ Those 14 counties include three of Eastern Washington's most populous
11 areas, including Spokane, the Tri-Cities, and Chelan County. The 14 counties have a total
12 population estimated by the Census Bureau at 1,012,634. Asuris covers just over 2 percent of
13 the population. In contrast, also at the end of 2002, Regence Blue Shield, the parent of Asuris,
14 had a total enrollment in Yakima and Walla Walla Counties alone -- two Eastern Washington
15 counties in which it can use the Blue Shield trademark -- of 23,429. This is over 8 percent of
16 the population. Hence, Regence is about four times more successful in competing with
17 Premera where it has an established position and the use of the Blue trademark.²⁸

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20 ²⁶ These calculations are based on the Premera Market Research data OICEXP NERA09394-98 for
individual and small plans excluding Medicare Supplemental.

21 ²⁷ This figure is from the OIC Form B filing.

22 ²⁸ The value of the Blue trademark is implied in the testimony of Premera witnesses. Gubby Barlow,
President and CEO, testified that the "Blue Cross Blue Shield license is a significant asset of Premera." (p. 15);
Heyward Donigan, Executive VP and Chief Marketing Officer, testified that "Premera faces a unique competitive
23 situation in that it competes directly with another Blue licensee, something that only occurs in a few places
throughout the country. Regence Blue Shield and Premera Blue Cross both offer Bluebranded products in
Western Washington, thereby increasing the competitive nature of
24 the marketplace." (p. 3)

1 24. The fourth "expansion" noted by Dr. McCarthy is that of NYLCare into Spokane
2 in 1998. NYLCare was shortly thereafter purchased by Aetna. By December 31, 2002, Aetna
3 had 23 members in all of Eastern Washington, hardly an example of significant and successful
4 entry.²⁹

5 25. The fifth "expansion" is Northwest One from Western Washington into Eastern
6 Washington. However, Northwest One is not an insurer and it provides no health insurance in
7 Eastern Washington.³⁰

8 26. The sixth and seventh purported expansions concern Group Health's entry into
9 Kittitas, Walla Walla, Whitman and Columbia counties in 2000 and 2001. Dr. McCarthy is
10 simply wrong that Group Health entered these counties in 2000 and 2001. In fact, Group
11 Health was present in these counties and offering services as early as 1992.³¹

12 Existing Insurers Have Not Gained Substantial Relevant Membership.

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14 27. Dr. McCarthy claims substantial gains in membership by certain insurers from
15 2001 to 2002.³² He suggests that this provides evidence of the ease of expansion and therefore
16 the absence of any barriers across product lines or geography and also of the competitive
17 constraint that other possible insurers represent to Premiera. However, only his example of
18 Regence Asuris in the small group market is relevant to the lines of business and areas in
19 which Premiera is dominant.

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21 ²⁹ OICEXP NERA 09394.

22 ³⁰ See footnote 3 to Table 3, McCarthy Testimony. See, also, OIC website. Northwest One does not
appear as a health insurer.

23 ³¹ E-mail Sally Yates, Associate General Counsel, Group Health Cooperative, to Keith Leffler 1/28/04.
See also, NERA 08049. There was a merging of Group Health Cooperative and its controlled affiliate Group
Health North West in 1999.

24 ³² Using a membership gain of at least 5,000 as a substantial gain, he includes Group Health and CIGNA
in large group, Asuris in small group, and Community Health Plan in Medicaid.

1 Conclusion as to Market Definition, Entry and Expansion

2 28. Dr. McCarthy offers a broad, overly inclusive market definition of all insurance
3 products offered by commercial and governmental insurers in the State of Washington. Dr.
4 McCarthy combines very different products and different locations regardless of the fact that,
5 for example, a small employer in Spokane County cannot and would not consider a Basic
6 Health Care policy offered by Molina or a individual policy offered by Regents Blue Shield in
7 Seattle. Dr. McCarthy certainly must recognize that the plan offerings in different lines of
8 business and the plan offerings in different locations offer no direct competitive constraint on
9 the pricing of small group policies in Spokane. Nonetheless, he includes all these in his single
10 market.

11 29. Dr. McCarthy reaches his overly inclusive market definition because, he asserts,
12 there is "no significant ... operational barriers for an existing insurer to offer new products,
13 expand into new lines of business, or expand into new geographical areas of the state."³³
14 However, when Dr. McCarthy's 16 examples of entry and expansion showing the absence of
15 entry barriers are examined closely, only one -- Regence Asuris -- is even marginally relevant.
16 The others are not helpful. In most instances this is apparent from documents from NERA's
17 own files. And even the experience of Asuris is far from compelling. The data indicates that
18 after six years in the market, Asuris, a subsidiary of one of the two largest insurers in the state,
19 has managed to capture only 13% of the enrollment in individual and small group lines of
20 business in Eastern Washington. Regardless of the presence of Asuris, Premiera continues to
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24 ³³ McCarthy Testimony p. 5.

1 dominate. I therefore conclude that Dr. McCarthy is wrong in his presumptions about the
2 absence of entry barriers and also in his overly broad market definition.

3 Premera Has Market Power in the Purchase of Provider Services in Certain Areas of
4 Eastern Washington.

5 30. Dr. McCarthy and I agree that the geographical markets for the purchase of
6 provider services are relatively narrow. He suggests that metropolitan areas are appropriate. I
7 do not disagree.³⁴ I provided market share data on a county basis in my Report because that is
8 the way the data are available from the OIC.

9 31. Dr. McCarthy, however, proposes that the relevant market share should be based
10 on the total purchases under all types of insurance, and that the relevant Premera market share
11 in the buying markets is about 25 percent.³⁵ I disagree since the reimbursement rates for the
12 patients enrolled under individual, small and large plans are typically higher than for other
13 types of insurance including state and federal subsidized plans. I find that the relevant market
14 share measuring Premera's share of the more valuable "private" insured patients was nearly
15 70% in Eastern Washington and over 80% for the 14 county area.³⁶

16 32. As evidence of Premera's market power, I found that in Spokane, Premera was
17 reimbursing physicians significantly lower rates than was Asuris or First Choice. I also found
18 that in Eastern Washington, Premera offered significantly lower reimbursement compared to
19 standard provider rates than it did in Western Washington. Dr. McCarthy did not dispute these
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22 ³⁴ As I stated in my Report: "I have also reached the opinion that there is a relevant economic market for
the purchase of provider services on a local basis within in the state of Washington. The exact definition of a
23 "local basis" is problematic, but generally I intend local basis to imply metropolitan areas." Report, at pp. 19-20.

24 ³⁵ McCarthy Testimony p. 8.

³⁶ See Table 3 of my Report. For the 14 county area, I took the simply average of the Eastern
Washington counties excluding Asotin, Garfield, Columbia, Klickitat, Walla Walla, and Yakima.

1 facts in his report or testimony.³⁷ To the contrary, he interpreted these facts as being consistent
2 with Premera's buying power in that he noted

3 "the fact that an insurer can get lower reimbursement rates in return for directing greater
4 volume to a provider is quite common and is generally considered procompetitive. The
5 economics literature refers to this practice as 'selective contracting' and many researchers
6 credit it as being one of the major reasons why managed care has been able to help control
7 the increase in health care costs."

8 The ability to get lower buying prices because of buyer market size (volume) is exactly what is
9 meant by market power on the buying side. Whether this is good or bad, and has or has not
10 helped control health care costs are not issues I have addressed. Rather the issue in an
11 appropriate competitive or antitrust analysis is simply whether Premera has such market
12 power. And the evidence clearly indicates that in those markets in Eastern Washington in
13 which Premera has the dominant market share of private, insured patients, it does have such
14 market power.

15 33. In his report at page 43 Dr. McCarthy asserts that small groups have joined together
16 in associations to pool their insurance volume. He claims that RCW 48.44.024 authorizes this.
17 The statute he cites does not authorize small groups to form associations for this purpose. In
18 addition, Premera's own underwriting rules preclude small groups from forming associations
19 just to pool their insurance volume.³⁸

20 Response to Audrey Halvorson

21 34. I have also reviewed the pre-filed direct testimony of Audrey Halvorson of
22 Premera. In my Report I examined the ratios between networks limited primarily to providers.

23 ³⁷ Dr. McCarthy analyzed provider reimbursements compared to Medicare RBRVS payments. NERA
24 Report pp. 49-52. However, the Medicaid reimbursements are not, and do not purport to be competitive market

1 having discounted contracts with Premiera and networks with providers not agreeing to
2 discounted fees. These ratios were higher in Eastern Washington than in Western Washington,
3 and I concluded that the difference was consistent with Premiera using its higher share of
4 insureds in Eastern Washington to exact higher discounts. In her testimony, Ms. Halvorson
5 disagrees with my analysis:

6 Q. Dr. Leffler states that the geographic area factors by network reflect the
7 provider reimbursement level differences by area. Do you agree with this
8 comment?

9 A. No, I do not. The network/geographic factors reflect the estimated relative cost of
10 care that is expected to be provided to members who live in each of the areas, not just
11 the differences in provider reimbursement levels. As stated previously, Premiera's
12 geographic area factors are based on expected differences in unit costs for hospital and
13 professional services within a defined area, efficiencies of the various networks by area,
14 and then adjusted for the pattern of where policyholders living within the area are
15 expected to receive care. Therefore, the differences in provider reimbursement levels
16 by area are only one of the three factors used to develop the geographic factors.

17 35. My analysis of the area factors was based on the results of a careful investigation
18 by the OIC consultants of how the area factors were calculated. First, we asked Premiera how
19 the area factors are determined:

20 Q1. Please describe in detail how the Medical Area/Network Factors shown in Exhibit
21 6.5³⁹ were determined.

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reimbursement rates.

³⁸ Bates #s 10381, 10393.

³⁹ See Premiera memo dated 5/23/03, responding to OIC data request #849. The reference to Exhibit 6.5 refers to Exhibit 6.5(Area/Network Factor Adjustment) of Premiera's small group rate filing, effective 6/1/03. The exhibit is Bates stamped #35195.

1 36. We were aware that provider efficiencies and "blending" providers areas into
2 employer group areas were aspects of the process of determining area factors, so we examined
3 how much they would alter area factors based solely on differences in provider reimbursement.
4 The answer was that they have little effect.⁴⁰

5 37. Finally, I asked Premera to confirm whether my interpretation of the area factor
6 ratios was correct. Here are my question and Premera's answer:

7 Question: In the Small Business rate filing of 6/1/03 (specifically document 0035195),
8 information is provided on the Area/Network Factor Adjustments for the Traditional
9 and for the Prudent Buyer (PB) Plans. The ratio of the Traditional to the PB Plan
10 Factors in each area would seem to indicate the extent to which overall (i.e. all
11 providers in the pertinent network) provider "discounts" are obtained in the area. Is this
12 interpretation correct?

13 Response: This interpretation is correct.⁴¹

14 38. Thus, while Ms. Halvorson's statement that "the differences in provider
15 reimbursement levels by area are only one of the three factors used to develop the geographic
16 factors" is technically correct, it is misleading and is inconsistent with Premera's earlier
17 acknowledgement that my interpretation is correct.
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23 ⁴⁰ See memo re telephone interview with David Braza, Director, MBS & HCE Actuarial, Premera;
24 Premera memo dated 7/14/03 with Attachment 1 (Small Group Area Factors Split into Cost and Utilization
Portions); document # 32335-336 and Exhibit 25 to McCarthy deposition.

⁴¹ #36554-555.

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I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington
that the foregoing is true and correct.

Dated April 14th, 2004 at Seattle, WA.

Keith Leffler

KEITH LEFFLER, PH.D